IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claim 6 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter presented therein. Please amend Claims 1, 4, 5, 7 and 9, and add new Claims 10 and 11 as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An image processing method comprising the steps of:

inputting image data representing an image, the image data ~~including a plurality of~~ having n color components;

generating input data by adding color difference data to the image data;

deciding output data having output ~~of a plurality of~~ color components, ~~which represent an image reproduced by~~ for an output device and output density data, by referring to [[a]] an n-dimensional table in which a correspondence between the input data and ~~a plurality of output patterns~~ the output data and the output density data is stored, based upon the input data, wherein the output density data represents a density of an output image reproduced by the output device based upon the output data ~~input data is generated by adding data distributed based upon color difference to the image data of the plurality of color components, and the color difference is generated by calculating the difference between the input data and the plurality of output patterns~~; ~~and~~

calculating the color difference data by subtracting the output density data from the input data; and

outputting the output data ~~of the plurality of~~ having output color components decided in ~~said~~ the deciding step,

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wherein the output color components include a cyan component and a magenta component,

and wherein the output data included in the n-dimensional table is decided such that the cyan component and the magenta component are not simultaneously output by the output device in an area where a density of the cyan component and a density of the magenta component are low, and is decided so as to minimize the difference between the input data and the output density data in other areas

~~wherein the output data is decided from candidates of a plurality of output patterns which are respective combinations of the plurality of color components, the color difference of combination in which either cyan or magenta is used being greater, in comparison to that of the combinations in which cyan and magenta are simultaneously used in high-contrast area~~.

2. and 3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the output data ~~of the plurality of~~ having the output color components is decided based upon quality of printing required.

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the output data ~~of the plurality of~~ having the output color components is decided based upon characteristics of printing media.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus comprising:

input means for inputting image data representing an image, the image data having n ~~of a plurality of~~ color components, ~~representing an image~~;

generating means for generating input data by adding color difference data to the image data;

deciding means for deciding output data having output ~~of a plurality of~~ color components ~~which represent an image reproduced by~~ for an output device and output density data, by referring to [[a]] an n-dimensional table in which a correspondence between the input data and ~~a plurality of output patterns~~ the output data and the output data density is stored, based upon the ~~plurality of items of color-component data of~~ input data, wherein the output density data represents a density of an output image reproduced by the output device based upon the output data ~~input data is generated by adding data distributed based upon color difference to the data of the plurality of color components, and the color difference is generated by calculating the difference between the input data and the plurality of output patterns~~; ~~and~~

calculating means for calculating the color difference data by subtracting the output density data from the input data; and

outputting means for outputting the output data ~~of the plurality of~~ having output color components decided by ~~said~~ the deciding means,

wherein the output color components include a cyan component and a magenta component,

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and wherein the output data included in the n-dimensional table is decided such that the cyan component and the magenta component are not simultaneously output by the output device in an area where a density of the cyan component and a density of the magenta component are low, and is decided so as to minimize the difference between the input data and the output density data in other areas

~~wherein the output data is decided from candidates of a plurality of output patterns which are respective combinations of the plurality of color components based upon the color difference of combination in which either cyan or magenta is used being grater, in comparison to that of combinations in which cyan and magenta are simultaneously used have been excluded from the candidates in high-contrast area~~.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable recording medium encoding a program for causing a computer to perform an image processing method comprising the steps of:

inputting image data representing an image, the image data ~~including a plurality of~~ having n color components;

generating input data by adding color difference data to the image data;

deciding output data having output ~~of a plurality of color components, which represent an image reproduced by~~ for an output device and output density data, by referring to [[a]] an n-dimensional table in which a correspondence between the input data and ~~a plurality of output patterns~~ the output data and the output density data is stored, based

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upon the input data, wherein the <u>output density data represents a density of an output image</u>

<u>reproduced by the output device based upon the output data</u> ~~input data is generated by~~

~~adding data distributed based upon color difference to the image data of the plurality of~~

~~color components, and the color difference is generated by calculating the difference~~

~~between the input data and the plurality of output patterns~~; ~~and~~

<u>calculating the color difference data by subtracting the output density data</u>

<u>from the input data; and</u>

outputting the output data ~~of the plurality of~~ <u>having output</u> color

components decided in ~~said~~ <u>the</u> deciding step,

<u>wherein the output color components include a cyan component and a</u>

<u>magenta component,</u>

<u>and wherein the output data included in the n-dimensional table is decided</u>

<u>such that the cyan component and the magenta component are not simultaneously output</u>

<u>by the output device in an area where a density of the cyan component and a density of the</u>

<u>magenta component are low, and is decided so as to minimize the difference between the</u>

<u>input data and the output density data in other areas</u>

~~wherein the output data is decided from candidates of a plurality of output~~

~~patterns which are respective combinations of the plurality of color components based~~

~~upon the color difference, and the combinations in which cyan and magenta are~~

~~simultaneously used have been excluded from the candidates in high-contrast area.~~

10. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the n-dimensional

table includes a first table in which a correspondence between the input data having the n

color components and the output data having the output color components, and a second

table in which a correspondence between the input data having the n color components and

the output density data having the n color components.

11. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the n color

components differs in a type from the output color components.